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INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL//J5/J2/POLAD//

UNCLAS PANAMA 002112

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PM](#)
SUBJECT: PANAMA CERTIFIES CANAL REFERENDUM RESULTS- 78
PERCENT VOTED YES

REF: PANAMA 2066

¶1. (U) The official results of the October 22 Canal expansion referendum were 705,144 "yes" votes in favor of expansion (77.80 percent) and 201,247 "no" votes (22.20 percent). There were 9,967 blank ballots cast and 7,673 null votes, where voters marked both options. Panama's Junta Nacional de Escrutino (JNE or National Counting Board) certified the final results at an October 25 ceremony attended by President Torrijos, various political parties, and groups that had supported the "yes" and "no" vote campaigns. Some "no" supporters, including the National Front for the Defense of Economic and Social Rights (FRENADESO), demonstrated outside the ceremony.

¶2. (U) The Canal referendum was the only vote in Panamanian history to win with such a wide margin and overwhelming mandate, said President Torrijos in his speech. He added that no one group, from the "yes" or "no" side, could claim responsibility for the low voter turnout -- the JNE certified that voter participation was 43.32 percent. (Comment: Explanations Poloffs have heard for low voter turnout include public confidence in the "yes" vote win, difficulty for some voters in reaching their assigned voting places, and the soccer matches on television. End Comment.)

¶3. (U) Overall, the Electoral Tribunal noted that the referendum voting was fair and transparent. The Organization of American States election observer mission drew the same conclusion in its mission report.

ARREAGA